

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BLANTY 00253 211920Z

72

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 CU-04 AID-20 DRC-01 /147 W

----- 125196

R 211415Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6855

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

DIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BLANTYRE 253

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, MI

SUBJ: INTERNAL UNREST

REF: A. IR 6 881 0025 74; B. BLANTYRE 229; C. A-71, 9/15/73

1. REF A REPORTS DEPLOYMENT COMPANY B MALAWI RIFLES AND ELEMENTS OF POLICE MOBILE FORCES AND SPECIAL BRANCH ABOUT FEBRUARY 11 TO KASUNGU AREA.

2. PRESIDENT BANDA JANUARY 21 ANNOUNCED REPLACEMENT OF CHIEF MWASE, PARAMOUNT CHIEF OF CHEWAS, LARGEST TRIBE IN MALAWI, BY HIS NEPHEW. OLD CHIEF MWASE WAS PLAKED UNDER HOUSE DETENTION IN SOUTHERN REGION. ON FEBRUARY 19 MASS MEETING HELD IN KASUNGU BY REGIONAL MINISTER KUMBWEZA BANDA AND DEPTUY REGIONAL MINISTER AARON GADAMA TO EXPLAIN BACKGROUND OF ACTION AND NEW DECISION TO REPLACE MWASE CHIEFTAINCY BY KAOMBA CHIEFTAINCY. TWENTY-FIVE YEAR OLD STUDENT NOW AT MALAWI UNIVERSITY DESIGNATED AS CHIEF KAOMBA. MINISTERS ASSERTED THAT KAOMBA CHIEFTAINCY RATHER THAN MWASE CHIEFTAINCY WAS ORIGINAL RULER OF KASUNGU
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PAGE 02 BLANTY 00253 211920Z

AREA.

3. IN THEIR STATEMENTS MINISTERS SAID CHIEF MWASE'S REPLACEMENT
STEMMED FROM HIS SUPPORT AT SEPTEMBER, 1973 MCP CONVENTION
FOR RETURN OF FORMER LEADER MANOAH CHIRWA (REF C). SUBSEQUENT
TO CONVENTION CHIEF MWASE FAILED TO SEEK "FORGIVENESS" OF
PRESIDENT BANDA FOR ERRONEOUS POSITION TAKEN. FURTHERMORE,
HE RESISTED SURRENDER OF CHIEFTAINSHIP TO HIS NEPHEW.

4. IN HIS SPEECH REGIONAL MINISTER STATED FLATLY THAT
CHIEFS IN MALAWI APPOINTED BY GRACE OF PRESIDENT. ANY CHIEF
WHO TRIES TO DISTURB PEACE AND CALM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.
DEPUTY REGIONAL MINISTER SAID PRESIDENT AND MCP ARE SUPREME
AND ANYONE TRYING TO ACT AGAINST THEM WILL BE DEALT WITH
WITHOUT MERCY.

5. COMMENT: CONTRARY TO STATEMENTS BY REGIONAL MINISTERS
CHIEF MWASE WAS LONG ESTABLISHED TRADITIONAL LEADER IN KASUNGU
AREA AND ENJOYED PERSONAL FOLLOWING NOT ONLY IN MALAWI BUT
AMONG CHEWAS ACROSS BORDER IN ZAMBIA. WE HAVE NOT PREVIOUSLY
HEARD OF KAOMBA CHIEFTAINSHIP. MWASE "SINNED" IN NOT
APOLOGISING FOR POSITION HE TOOK ON MANOAH CHIRWA AT MCP
CONVENTION AND APPARENTLY HIS FOLLOWERS IN AREA MADE MANIFEST
THEIR DISSATISFACTION AT HIS REMOVAL. THIS LED TO PRESIDENT'S
DECISION TO SHIFT CHIEFTAINSHIPS AND ALSO TO REMOVE ABOUT
EIGHT SUB-CHIEFS, SUPPORTERS OF MWASE. PRESIDENT BANDA AND MCP
LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY SENSITIVE TO DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL
REGION WHICH IS HOME BASE OF PARTY. CRITICISM OF DECISIONS
BY MCP CONVENTION IS NOT TOLERATED. WE REGARD DEPLOYMENT OF
SECURITY FORCES AS PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE TO SERVE AS WARNING
AGAINST DISTURBANCES. DESPITE UNHAPPINESS OVER GOVERNMENT'S
ACTION, TRADITIONAL CHIEFS LACK POWER AND WE DO NOT REGARD
AFFAIR AS LIKELY TO DISTURB PUBLIC ORDER. WE DO NOT BELIEVE
MATTER IS CONNECTED TO EXPULSION MINISTER MSONTHI FROM MCP
(REF C). MSONTHI HAS NOT BEEN CLOSE TO TRADITIONAL CHIEFS AND
ALTHOUGH HE IS FROM CENTRAL REGION HE LACKS PERSONAL POWER
BASE.
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